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SUBJECT: UNODC Lays Out Vision for Eventual Realignment

¶1. SUMMARY: Encouraged by member states to think more thematically, yet constrained by its biennial program plan, UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) management officials briefed the U.S. and select other member states on their latest attempts to rationalize UNODC's work, and their hopes to secure member state endorsement of a formal reorganization for the 2012-2013 biennium. In the meantime, UNODC unveiled a self-described "pilot phase" wherein activities of its Divisions of Operations (DO) and Treaty Affairs (DTA) will be increasingly coordinated around five "inter-divisional task teams" (or "themes"), each of which will be headed by a task team leader and which will be accountable to a "joint directorate." The goal of the pilot phase is to increase communication and coordination between the existing activities of the two divisions, while at the same time decreasing duplication of work and competition for financial contributions. UNVIE welcomes DO and DTA's attempts to break down the "stovepipe" effect UNODC occasionally suffers from, as well as its continued progress towards thematic planning. However, UNVIE notes that DTA's important normative work could be compromised by the continuing vacancy in its directorship and will encourage UNODC to ensure the DTA directorship remains viable. END SUMMARY.

UNODC Unveils Pilot
Phase, Task Teams

¶2. On September 3, Frances Maertens, Director of DO, John Sandage (Amcit), Officer-in-Charge of DTA, and Chris Kirckaldy, Chief of Financial Resources Management, briefed a select number of member states regarding their vision for rationalizing UNODC operations, with the goal of ultimately reorganizing the way it does business.

¶3. UNODC is currently operating under the 2008-2009 biennial budget. This budget, as well as the proposed 2010-2011 budget, is organized around three divisions - DO, DTA, and the Department of Policy Analysis (DPA), and their respective sub-divisions. The Biennial Program Plan, known as "Programme 13" further enshrines this configuration by including an organizational chart complete with the division and sub-divisional breakdowns for 2010-2011. As a result, despite calls from member states for UNODC to undertake organizational reforms, UNODC is constrained from formally reorganizing itself until the 2012-2013 budget biennium.

¶4. Nevertheless, conscious of member states', including the U.S., calls to be more thematic in its work, UNODC has developed a "pilot phase," wherein the respective work of DO and DTA will be increasingly coordinated and organized around five themes: Organized Crime and Trafficking, Corruption, Terrorism Prevention, Criminal Justice, and Health and Human Development. Each theme is actually a "cluster" of existing DO and DTA programs. Each theme will be led by one officer, who will be responsible for encouraging communication and coordination between the offices under his/her purview, and creating one vision for the theme. However, employees will not physically move offices, nor will job responsibilities change. Instead, the task team leader is responsible for working with what already exists, and trying to make programming more effective and coherent.

15. The task team leaders will report to DO and DTA senior managers, who are already increasingly coordinated on day-to-day issues such as recruitment and travel. This new managerial body, proposed as a "joint directorate," is responsible for ensuring that UNODC is marrying its operational and normative-based work more effectively while at the same time better clarifying each division's responsibilities. This management structure will be supported by three cross-cutting functional groups: 1) Commissions Secretariat; 2) The Integrated Program Unit; and 3) Program Monitoring and Oversight.

Game Plan for Long Term,
Formal Reorganization

16. As the pilot phase moves forward, UNODC continues to develop its longer-term plans for a more formal reorganization. This formal reorganization would require member state endorsement; therefore, at the meeting, UNODC officials laid out a step-by-step process that they believe would provide them the mandate to move forward. The governing bodies of UNODC - the Commissions on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) - will meet in December to review the 2010-2011 UNODC budget. UNODC hopes member states can also approve a resolution in December that "takes note" of the pilot phase and requests UNODC to report back to the commissions' spring 2010 sessions. At the spring session, UNODC would then formally present its vision for a reorganized operation, and member states would consider approving the proposal for the 2012-2013 budget.

UNVIE VIEN 00000426 002 OF 002

Vacant DTA Directorship Leaves Division
Vulnerable to Diminished Influence
in Reorganized UNODC

17. On the margins of the meeting, DTA Deputy Director John Sandage (Amcit) raised the issue of the DTA Directorship vacancy. The DTA Director position has been vacant since the departure of the previous incumbent in March 2009. Executive Director Costa has frozen the hiring of a new officer, primarily as a temporary cost-saving measure. Sandage expressed concern that Costa may be prevented from hiring a replacement after December 2009 (the six-month window before Costa's own term expires). In addition, Sandage noted that if the DTA Directorship (funded from the UN's regular budget) is left delinquent for one year (i.e., until March 2010), New York has the option to permanently abolish it. UNVIE believes that a DTA Director, responsible for UNODC's normative programs, is important and the organization would be weakened without one. Therefore, UNVIE will seek to engage with UNODC leadership to verify that UNODC will take the appropriate steps to ensure the DTA director position in UNODC is preserved.

Comment

18. UNVIE believes streamlining UNODC management and creating a coherent strategy organized around themes would enhance the organization's long-term viability. The U.S. should continue to support UNODC's proposal. At the same time, we should remain vigilant in preserving DTA's prominent role in UNODC. UNODC management has heard our message so far, and we do not believe that UNODC's current pilot phase or the longer-term reorganization vision undermine DTA's vital work. UNVIE will continue to underscore these messages with UNODC's leadership. END COMMENT

DAVIES